

ALDEN HOUSE

DUXBURY HISTORY FILE
REFERENCE

Keeping the Revolution alive

By Jenifer B. McKim
GLOBE STAFF

DUXBURY — When Rob Bothwell ends his work week as an international insurance broker, he likes to don his felt hat, pick up his musket, and do battle with the British.

Well, almost. The 32-year-old father of three is captain of a company of faux soldiers who travel the East Coast on weekends to carry out reenactments of Revolutionary War battles.

Yesterday, he and some 40 other 18th century enthusiasts from around New England gathered at the home of Pilgrim John Alden to march, shoot muskets, chug beer from tin cups and sleep in canvas tents like their forefathers may have done more than 200 years ago.

"This is a hobby for us," said Bothwell, dressed in black breeches and a long blue coat. "We are all history buffs."

Indeed. Thousands of Revolutionary War

aficionados are said to meet along the East Coast on various weekends to reenact parts of the war that freed the 13 colonies from British rule. They join Civil War buffs in the hobby as well as others in Europe who step into armor or emulate cavemen on weekend getaways into the past, participants said.

"I like the living history aspect," said Laurie Rantz of Middleborough, who arrived at the camp with her husband, Dean, a blacksmith in the 18th century reenactment as well as in real life. "This is just for fun."

In theory, the company of soldiers and their wives and children arrived at the Alden home under command of "Captain" Bothwell to recruit fresh troops after losses in the battle at Breed's Hill. They were invited by Captain Briggs Alden, born in 1723, the fifth owner of the historic house originally built and owned by Mayflower Pilgrim John Alden.

In reality, the group camped out for the

weekend to launch the tourist season for the Alden House, owned by the Alden Kindred of America Inc. and open through Labor Day.

They made camp, pitching their canvas tents in military rows behind the house. Women readied dinner, lighting an open wood fire to cook a beef ragout. Dean Rantz, the blacksmith, set up his smithy, heating up coals with a bellows while nine "militiamen," cleaned their muskets and readied for training.

Karen Hayden of Lawrence said she has attended reenactments for almost 15 years. She was introduced to the hobby by her husband, and loves dressing in 18th century garb, cooking, sewing, and forgetting about her stressful job in the cable industry.

She also has learned a lot about the time period, something which she hated to study as a student.

"I've learned so much," said Hayden, sitting and sewing. "It makes it real for you."



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / JOHN TLUMACKI

Frank Chamberlain (right), of Holliston, prepares to perform a military drill at the John Alden House in Duxbury.

MAKING HAY IN THE SUNSHINE



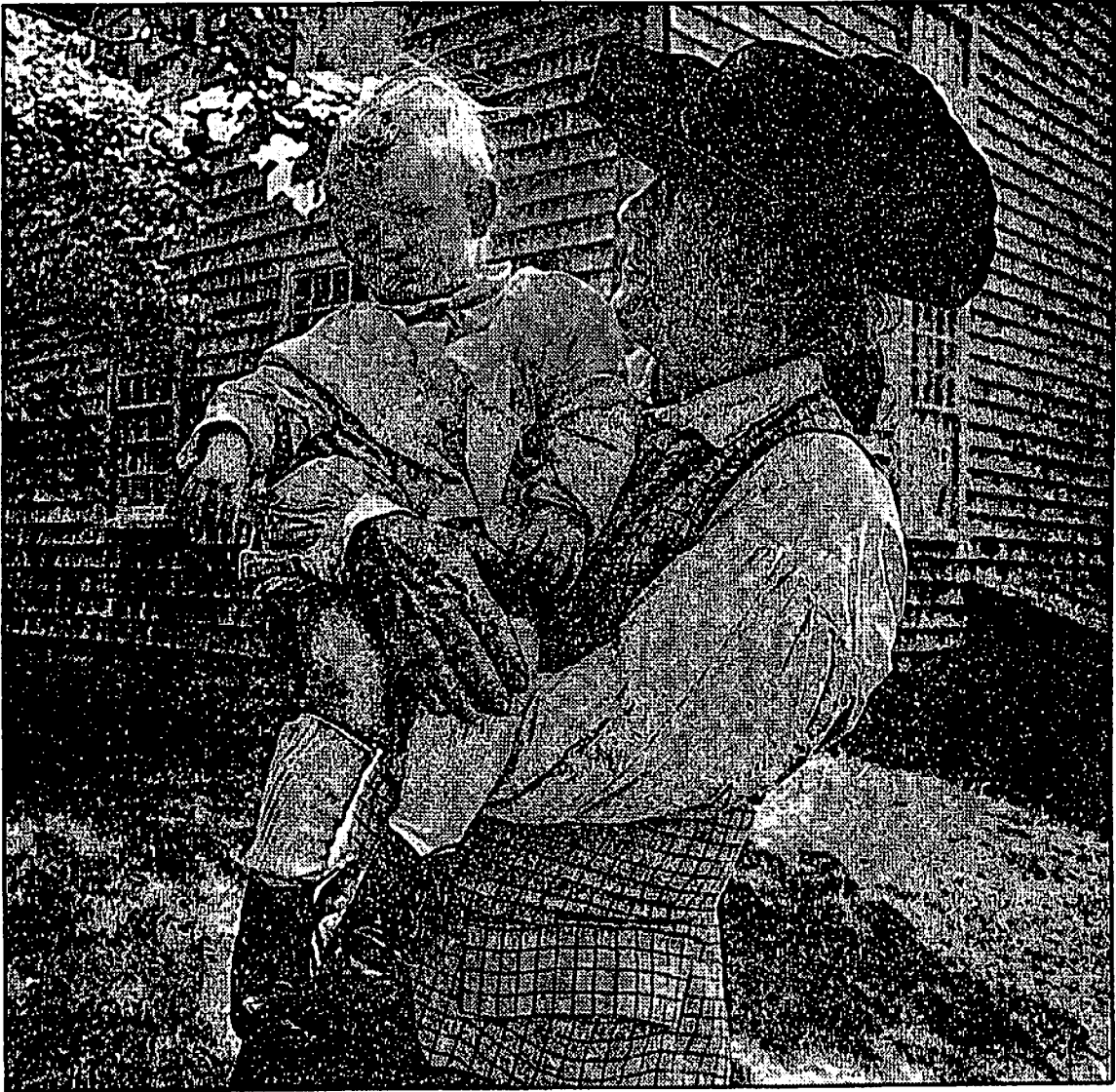
GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / JOHN T. LUMACKI

William Newell, 8, of Weston gathers hay yesterday at a Revolutionary War encampment at the John Alden House in Duxbury, where 18th-century enthusiasts gathered. B2.

Below, James McCue rests in a pile of hay during the day's activities.



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Time out for history

Carl Becker, a participant in a Revolutionary War re-enactment in Duxbury yesterday, holds daughter Amelia outside the John Alden House. Below, James McCue rests in a pile of hay during the day's activities.